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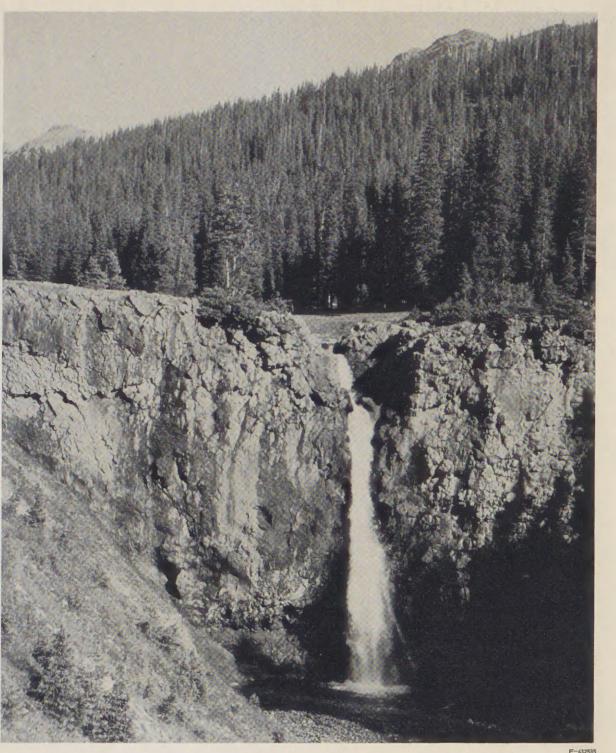
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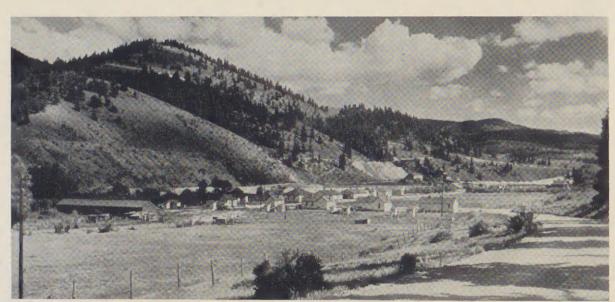
UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE FOREST SERVICE

Rocky Mountain Region

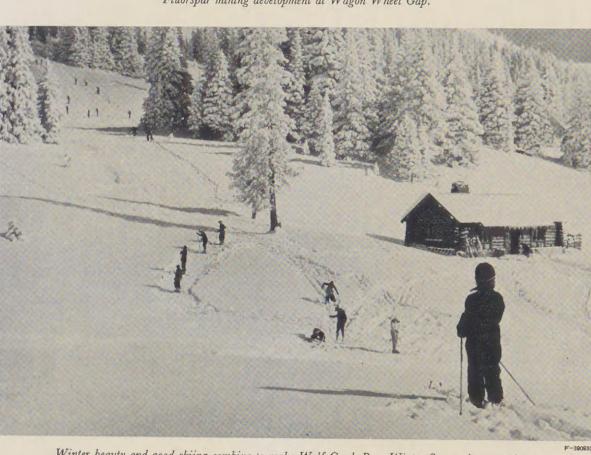
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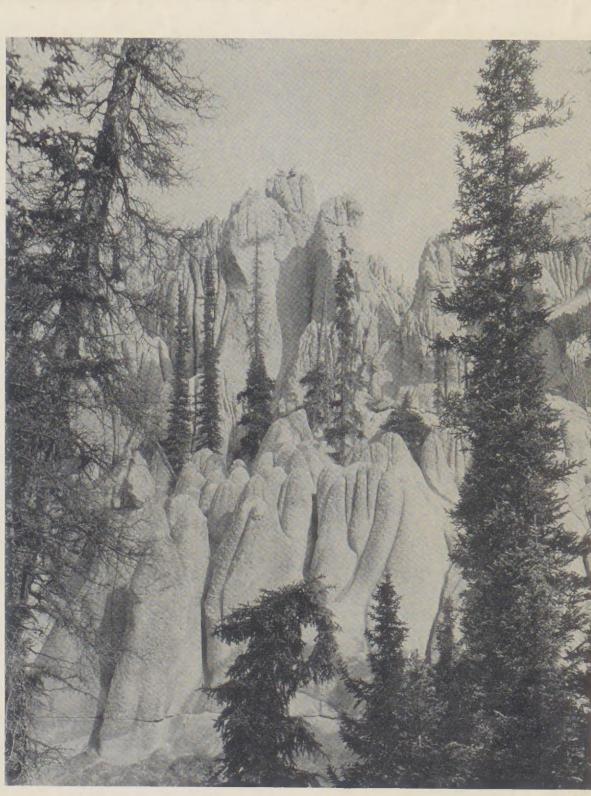
Well-timbered slopes mean the difference between clean water for communities and farms downstream or muddy streams sometimes dry, sometimes flooded.



Fluorspar mining development at Wagon Wheel Gap.



Winter beauty and good skiing combine to make Wolf Creek Pass Winter Sports Area popular.



The "ghosts" on Wheeler National Monument.

## Welcome to the Rio Grande Forest ...

It has slightly more than 1% million acres within rich agricultural lands of the San Luis Valley are into Santa Fe.

on the forest. Principal rivers from north to south are the Rio Grande, Alamosa, and Conejos. about 8,000 feet above sea level (South Fork, 8,191) to more than 14,000 feet (Crestone Peak, 14,291). It differs from many regions in a similar altitudinal timber-line country is comparatively smooth, making it well suited for sheep grazing, while the 1848. lower parts of the forest furnish summer range for cattle. This variation in altitude also makes the forest ideal as a recreation area, and as such it is used by thousands each year. It abounds in fishing streams and lakes that are stocked each year and starvation. Considerable scientific material from State and Federal hatcheries in order to meet was left by the party at this camp and at others as

fisherman demands. and Cumbres Pass Highway (State 17). More Forest Service, supplement these main highways. Service, give access to many other parts of the of Creede.

### HISTORICAL HIGH LIGHTS

Grande National Forest was the stronghold of the San Juan Basin from the Gregory Diggings (Cen-Comanche Indians. The first recorded entrance tral City). He was warned by the Ute Indians to of white men into the area was in 1779 when Juan leave, and after great hardships he and his party Bautista de Anza led the Spaniards against these escaped into the San Luis Valley. One of the

ting of mature, overmature, diseased, and defective

trees promotes faster growth in trees that are left.

newspapers and sold to the highest bidder. The

buyers are owners and operators of private lumber

mills whose products are used in the San Luis

During 1948 there were 16 sawmills of various

sizes on or adjacent to the forest engaged in the

manufacture of lumber. These mills cut approxi-

mately 5 million feet, board measure, of lumber

considerable number of mine props, telephone

poles, and other miscellaneous forest products were

also obtained from the forest. About 11/2 million

feet board measure of forest products-usually

dead material that can be used for fuel wood,

fence material, and cellar poles—is given free each

year to farmers and residents who reside near the

It is estimated that under management the Rio

Grande can continuously produce annually 30

million feet board measure of saw timber. How-

ever, limited demand, distance from large popula-

tion centers and markets, and difficult logging

conditions, make it very doubtful that such an

allowable annual cut will be attained for many

years to come. The Rio Grande contains enough

Engelmann spruce and associated species to

maintain a sizable pulp and paper industry for an

indefinite period. Here again, the distance from

market, and especially the lack of an adequate

water supply, prevents the establishment of such

an industry in the San Luis Valley, at least in the

foreseeable future.

nature and scenic trails.

river and stream fishing.

nature and scenic trails.

be obtained at nearby ranch.

River fishing.

horse trails.

nearby.

on State 149 and Rio Grande Reservoir forest

dle horses, fishing, nature and scenic trails.

Pass on State 114. Camping, picnicking,

Gap on State 149. Camping and picnicking.

Fork on US 160. Camping, picnicking, fish-

road. Camping, picnicking, fishing, nature

(1) PARK CREEK.—9 miles southwest of South

wild game, nature hikes, and wild flowers.

® LUDERS CREEK.—2 miles east of Cochetopa

Valley and elsewhere.

One of 152 such national forests located through- Indians in the Green Horn Mountains (now the out the United States which are for your benefit Wet Mountains). The expedition kept to the east and pleasure. This forest lies along the headwaters of the Rio Grande del Norte on its northern march; of the Rio Grande Del Norte, "Great River of the and, on its return to Santa Fe, crossed the river near

North," and is one of the largest of 11 in Colorado. Del Norte, keeping to the west near the foothills. Zebulon Pike, the famous explorer, constructed its boundaries and, except for a small area in the a pretentious fort on the lower Conejos River late extreme northwest corner, is located entirely on in January 1807. Pike and his men had occupied the eastern slope of the Continental Divide. Head- the fort for less than a month, however, when they waters of all rivers and streams that flow into the were forced to accompany superior Spanish forces

A considerable part of the Conejos country was deeded by the Mexican Government to four of its Altitudes on the Rio Grande forest vary from prominent citizens in 1842. Twelve years passed before the first successful colony on the grant was established on the Conejos River north of the present town of Antonito. In the meantime, as a result zone in that a great part of its 350,000 acres of of the war with Mexico, the area where the forest is located had become part of the United States in

That year John C. Fremont crossed over from the drainage of the Rio Grande and descended to timber line on the opposite side. It was at that point that most of his mules perished from the cold they retreated to the Rio Grande. The following Both narrow- and standard-gage lines of the spring, Bill Williams and Benjamin Kern returned Denver and Rio Grande Western Railway give to recover certain instruments and some of the access to the forest, and three important highways baggage. They were killed by Indians, and it is cross it. These are Wolf Creek Pass Highway (U S not known what became of the instruments they 160), South Fork Lake City Highway (State 149), went to recover. Some of the clothes, however, were being worn in the summer of 1849 by than 150 miles of good auto roads, built by the Indians who apparently had murdered Kern and Williams. Tangible evidence of the Fremont camp In addition, 1,500 miles of trails and stock drive-site was found by a forest ranger in 1930 on the ways, also built and maintained by the Forest north fork of Embargo Creek, about 16 miles east

Stony Pass, between the head of the Rio Grande and Silverton, originally called Baker's Park, was first traversed by wagons in 1861 or 1862. At that In the 1700's the country that is now the Rio time Jim Baker led a prospecting party to the

minor species of coniferous trees, such as corkbark, shown that in many cases the amount of water alpine, and white fir; blue spruce; limber, bristle- produced from timbered areas is appreciably incone, and pinon pine; and juniper, are also found creased by the thinning or harvesting of certain on the forest. Other minor species include aspen, amounts of the trees. The main reason for the cottonwoods, willows, etc. increase is that in dense stands much snow is This forest cover is managed by trained foresters caught by the branches and twigs. A large part whose objective it is to keep the trees producing a of this snow is lost through evaporation. In

[I]

In carrying out the management plan, a forest Certain areas within the Rio Grande are classified officer selects and marks mature trees that are to be sold. This timber is then advertised in local owners of the livestock.

during that year. In addition to the lumber, a tions is dry and water scarce.

> for the headwaters of important streams. This is forage species have developed enough herbage to provide ample grazing; by balancing livestock numbers with the production of available forage; and by obtaining the best possible distribution of animals over the range.

manage the forest. Recent experiments have and in maintaining uniform stream flow.

stream and lake fishing, nature and scenic State 17 to Platoro, then down the Alamosa River through the ghost town of Jasper to State 15, and 6 LA MANGA.—26 miles west of Antonito on on to Monte Vista. State 170. Camping, picnicking, fishing,

At present, there is only one winter sports area on the forest. It is the Wolf Creek Pass Winter 7 LOST TRAIL.—38 miles southwest of Creede Sports Area at the Continental Divide on State 160. Other suitable areas are available for deroad. Camping, picnicking, pack trips, sad-velopment when there is need for additional winter sports facilities.

## MINING

Like other parts of the early West, the Rio Grande (9) MARSHALL PARK.—7 miles south of Creede had its share of rough and roaring mining towns. on State 149 and Trout Creek road. Camp-Names of famous mines still remembered are the ing and picnicking. Nature and scenic trails, Holy Moses, Last Chance, and Amethyst; and other reminders of a colorful era are found in a 1 PALISADE.—4 miles east of Wagon Wheel number of ghost towns. The better known of these abandoned camps are Beartown at the head of the Rio Grande and Sky City west of Saguache. All prospecting and mining on Government-owned land are subject to United States mining laws. ing in South Fork of Rio Grande, foot and Ores produced on the Rio Grande from 1891 to the close of 1948 were valued at \$50,960,360, ac-12 RIVER HILL.—29 miles southwest of Creede cording to records of the United States Bureau of on State 149 and Rio Grande Reservoir forest Mines. The value of ore produced in 1948 was more than \$470,000; 71 percent of the output that

and scenic trails. Saddle horses are available. year was represented by silver. 3 ROCK CREEK.—17 miles southwest of Monte The most active mining camps on the Rio Grande Vista on Rock Creek forest road. Picnicking, at the present time are in the Bonanza mining district, west of Villa Grove, in Saguache County. (4) SPECTACLE LAKE.—30 miles west of Antonito These mines produce, in order of importance, via State 17 and the Conejos-Alamosa forest silver, lead, copper, zinc, and gold, and their total road. Camping, picnicking, nature and

put in 1948 was valued at \$9,857,289 scenic trails. Fishing in river. Lake fishing The ore deposits around Summitville, while available by horseback travel. Horses may smaller and less productive than those in the Creede district, were discovered some 20 years (5) THIRTY MILE.—31 miles southwest of Creede earlier. Total mineral production of Rio Grande on State 149 and Rio Grande Reservoir forest County, almost all of which came from the Sumroad. Camping, picnicking, fishing, nature mitville district from 1870 to the close of 1948, was and scenic trails. Supply store near the camp \$7,427,488. Except for inconsequential values in ground. Saddle horses may be obtained silver, copper, and lead, this production was almost entirely gold, that precious metal representing a

Tourist accommodations are offered by numerous little more than 94 percent of the values. hotels, resorts, and cabin camps in towns near to, The Creede mining district, on the other hand, or on the forest, and saddle horses are easily ob- has been chiefly a silver camp. That metal actained for trips into remote parts of the forest. counts for more than 70 percent of the ore value, Motorists will find that there are a number of with lead—a metal with which silver is commonly interesting and scenic "circle tours." One, for associated—representing about 23 percent more. exmple, is on the road up the Conejos River from Gold production has been slightly less than 6 per-

[5]

harmony with grazing use. maximum yield of products and to protect and thinned stands, more snow reaches the ground improve watershed values for the area. The cut- where it can form water for the local streams.

### Forage

as range land and are divided into separate allotments for cattle and sheep. The number of sheep or cattle each allotment will support is determined by trained forest officers from range surveys and from actual use. Grazing on national-forest lands is done under permits issued to and paid for by

Range land within the Rio Grande affords an average 4½-month summer grazing season for nearly 14,000 cattle, and a 3-month season for 106,000 sheep, owned by 320 permit holders from the San Luis Valley. This summer range is of great importance because it provides grazing for livestock at a time when forage at the lower eleva-

The aim of the Forest Service is to maintain a good cover of forage plants that will be of high value to the range livestock industry and at the same time furnish maximum watershed protection accomplished by grazing the livestock during the period when the soil is sufficiently dry and firm to prevent excessive trampling and when the principal

Research shows that plants must not be grazed too early and that a considerable volume of forage must be left at the end of the grazing season. This avoids damage to individual plants. The mulch of plant material left on the range adds organic matter to the soil that takes up and holds precipita-The relationship between timber and the water- tion. Thus, a properly managed range is of vital shed it covers is always of concern to those who importance in preventing rapid runoff and erosion,

found on the Rio Grande.

Range improvements, such as drift and boundary fences, counting corrals, stock water developments, stock driveways, and range reseeding where natural forage plant recovery is too slow, are usually made by the Forest Service. The LaGarita Driveway, beginning on LaGarita Creek and continuing often high above timber line to the westernmost areas of the forest, is one of the longest driveways in the State. Many thousands of ewes and lambs use this trail in going to and from their summer ranges. Improvements for convenience of the permittees, such as cabins for riders, horse corrals, and pastures, are built by the stockmen or by local livestock associations.

numerous stories regarding the naming of Wagon

Wheel Gap is based on the tradition that a wheel

Gold was discovered in the San Juan Mountains

in 1870, and the following year there was a rush

to that remote corner of the territory. Prior to

that time settlement in the Rio Grande Valley

was almost entirely by people of Spanish and

Mexican extractions who came from old Mexico.

New towns grew up in the valley to meet the need

for outfitting points and way stations on the road

to the San Juan mines. Del Norte, established in

1872, served as a wintering place for the miners

Towns and ranches in the San Luis Valley and

mines in the San Juan Mountains brought in the

railroad. The track was laid across LaVeta

Pass and into the San Luis Valley in 1877-78.

The coming of the railroad, of course, stimulated

settlement. The town of Alamosa was started

upon the arrival of the railroad in 1878; Henry

was settled in 1882 and incorporated under the

as it exists at the present time was set aside by Presi-

dential proclamation on June 3, 1905, as the San

Juan Forest Reserve, and part of it 10 days later

as the Cochetopa Forest Reserve. By proclama-

tion of July 1, 1908, the Rio Grande was formed

within practically its present boundaries by di-

viding the San Juan along the Continental Divide,

leaving that part on the eastern slope within the

Rio Grande and adding, on the north, a part of

mainly by exchange and administrative con-

solidations from nearby national forests-have

added about one-half million acres to the original

FOREST RESOURCES

primary purposes of protecting the watersheds

for the regulation of stream flow; providing tim-

ber for the Nation, forage for domestic livestock,

and food and shelter for wildlife; and affording

recreational opportunities for the public. In addi-

tion to these resources, valuable minerals are

the old Cochetopa forest. Subsequent additions—

A large part of the Rio Grande National Forest

present name of Monte Vista in 1884.

of the Summitville district.

from one of Baker's wagons was found there.

### Wildlife

blue and willow grouse, ptarmigan, ducks, and other kinds of game are to be found on the Rio Grande. The game animals naturally use parts of the forest that cannot be used efficiently for domestic stock. Furbearing animals, such as beaver, mink, marten, fox, muskrat, badger, and weasel, are also present on the forest.

The Forest Service and the Colorado State Department of Game and Fish cooperate closely in managing the wildlife resource of the Rio Grande so that sportsmen may continue to enjoy the privilege of hunting and fishing on the forest. A State license is required, but with few exceptions the entire forest is open to hunting during seasons established by the State Department of Game and

Native eastern brook, rainbow, and Lochleven trout are present in more than 600 miles of streams (4) CONEJOS.—Approximately 30 miles west of on the forest. Two of the most famous of these are the Rio Grande Del Norte and the Conejos. There are also numerous small lakes scattered throughout the alpine sections, high up on the Continental Divide, which afford excellent sport. Some of the larger irrigation reservoirs are also stocked and open to fishing.

Heavily fished streams are stocked each year

cent of the total values, with small quantities of

## SITES FOR SUMMER HOMES

Persons desiring a permanent summer residence entitle them to erect substantial cabins on desirable sites in established summer home groups. There is an annual charge of \$25 for a residence permit. Summer homes are only permitted on lands not suitable to, or needed for, other public uses. At the present time there are approximately 100 summer residences on the forest, and there is an increasing demand for sites. Maps, descriptions, and full information may be obtained from the

#### office of the forest supervisor at Monte Vista, Colo. WILDERNESS AREAS

The entire watersheds of Ute, Weminuche, Squaw, and Little Squaw Creeks, located near the headwaters of the Rio Grande del Norte, have been set aside as the Upper Rio Grande wild area. It contains 56,600 acres that join the San Juan wilderness area on the west. Together, these areas make up nearly 300,000 acres of alpine beauty and ruggedness. A second, the LaGarita-Sheep Mountain wild area, located in the north central part of the forest, adds another 38,000 acres of have been caused by carelessness. BE CAREFUL virgin country.

These areas are essentially primitive, untouched listed on the back of this folder. by man, except for a minimum of construction that is necessary for their protection and administration They have no automobile roads within their boundaries, and none will be built. The only practical means of access is by trail with saddle horse and pack outfit. Their designation as wilderness areas means that they will remain as nearly headquarters are in Monte Vista, Colo., and it is as possible in their natural, primitive condition, divided into seven districts, each of which is for wilderness enjoyment, observation, study, and Managed by a forest ranger. These rangers are simple recreation, unmarred by the presence of located at Del Norte, River Springs, Creede, Monte summer homes, resorts, or modern conveniences. Vista, and Saguache.

#### WHEELER NATIONAL zinc and copper making up the remainder.

The Wheeler National Monument, within Rio Grande National Forest, is made up of grotesque geological formations that were caused by erosive on the forest may obtain special-use permits that forces. It was set aside by Presidential proclamation and named in honor of George Wheeler, United States engineer. The area, a fantasy in stone that the visitor will long remember, is administered by the National Park Service, and may be reached by saddle horse from Creede over a Forest Service trail 12 miles in length. The route leads across the face of Mammoth Mountain (11,042 feet) and gives a superb view of the upper Rio Grande country and of Creede, with its nearby mining activities.

MONUMENT

## HELP US TO PREVENT FIRES

The scars of destructive forest fires that burned years ago are still to be seen in many places on the Rio Grande. However, as a result of organized protection, only 1,881 acres have burned over in the 41-year period from 1909 to 1949, inclusive. This is an average annual fire loss of only 46 acres. The worst fire year was in 1939 when 506 acres burned. Without the prompt action of local citizens and forest officers, the acreage burned and damage sustained would unquestionably have been very much greater. Most of the fires in the forest WITH FIRE! Follow the six fire-prevention rules

## ASK FOR INFORMATION

Officers of the Rio Grande will be glad to answer inquiries regarding the resources of the forest, places of interest, or their work. The forest is

Grazing use is closely correlated with timber with young trout grown at State hatcheries at production and forage use by big-game animals, Monte Vista and La Jara in the San Luis Valley, principally deer, elk, and mountain sheep. Camp- and at the Federal hatchery near Creede. The grounds and other areas of intensive recreation use Forest Service cooperates with the Bureau of are usually fenced, or are so located as to be in Fisheries and the State in the distribution of trout under agreed plans.

Water

The forest cover and soil on the slopes of the

Rio Grande watershed must be maintained and

protected so that it can absorb and hold back

potential flood water, and feed clear, pure water

gradually into streams for local domestic and

industrial use, and for use far down the valleys of

The drainage basin of the Rio Grande and its

tributaries is comprised of an area of about 2,930

square miles within the national forest. Below

this headwater area, the main streams—the Rio

Grande, Alamosa, and Conejos Rivers-flow

with more or less even and gradual fall to the

The San Luis Valley is comprised of approxi-

mately 4,900,000 acres. The valley floor of 3

million acres lies in general at elevations below

8,500 feet where precipitation is insufficient for

agriculture or industries. However, the other

1,900,000 acres of the valley—nearly all within

the national forest-has elevations above 8,500

feet. The heavy precipitation that occurs at the

higher elevations, mostly in the form of snow from

October to April, makes possible irrigation of the

valley floor. Thus, agriculture and industries in

San Luis Valley and in communities on down the

Rio Grande into New Mexico and Texas are

The average annual production of water from

streams whose source is the Rio Grande National

Forest is about 1,600,000 acre-feet—exactly half

of all the water produced on the Rio Grande water-

shed in New Mexico and Colorado combined. On

this basis, the average acre of the forest produces

84/100 acre-feet of water per year. In some in-

stances water has actually sold in the San Luis

Valley at a minimum of \$2 per acre-foot. Using

that figure, the average acre of land within the

Rio Grande National Forest produces \$1.68 worth

Timber

the Rio Grande is estimated to exceed 4½ billion

board feet. Engelmann spruce is the most abun-

dant species; other important species are ponderosa

pine, Douglas-fir, and lodgepole pine. Several

The total merchantable volume of saw timber on

All national forests were established for the of water each year, for a total value of almost

[2]

flat, fertile San Luis Valley below.

the larger streams.

#### Recreation

This forest is extensively used by residents of the San Luis Valley for picnicking, camping, fishing, and hunting. In addition, there is an ever growing recreational use by people who enter the forest over the five main highways that lead into the alley. These tourists and summer visitors are largely from Texas, Oklahoma, and Kansas. Fifty-four recreation areas have been provided within the forest for the convenience and use of visitors. Most of these areas are conveniently located along the main-traveled roads, and most of them are equipped with water and garbage facilities, fire grates, tables, and toilets. Many are Deer, elk, mountain sheep, bears, lions, bobcats, fenced against livestock. There is no charge for the use of these recreation areas; however, all visitors are requested to obey the fire prevention rules that are on the back of this folder and to leave a clean camp. The 15 most heavily used recreation areas are as follows:

> (1) ASPEN GLADE,—17 miles west of Antonito (U S 285). Camping, picnicking, nature and scenic hikes, fishing.

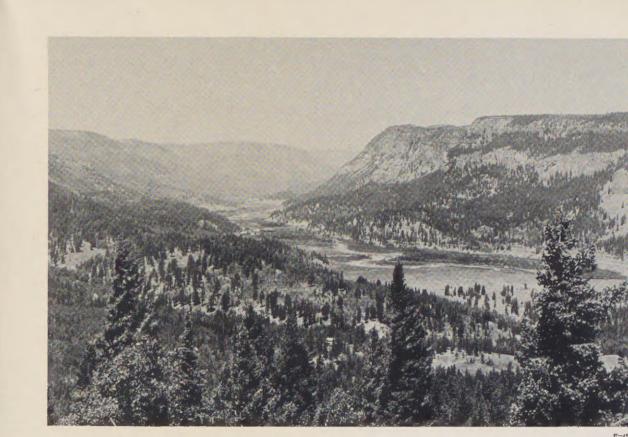
BEAVER CREEK.—5 miles southwest of South Fork, on US 160 and Beaver Creek Reservoir forest road. Camping, picnicking, foot and horse trails, stream and lake fishing, nature and scenic trails.

COMSTOCK.—20 miles southwest of Monte Vista on Rock Creek forest road. Camping,

picnicking, nature and scenic trails. Antonito via State 17 and the Conejos-Alamosa forest road. Camping, picnicking, nature and scenic trails. Fishing in river. Lake fishing available by horseback travel; horses available at nearby ranch resort.

CROSS CREEK.—7 miles southwest of South Fork on U S 160 and Beaver Creek Reservoir forest road. Picnicking, foot and horse trails,

[4]



Misty falls lend enchantment to the forest.

FIRE PREVENTION RULES

them in brush, leaves, or needles. Do 5. Brush burning.—Never burn slash or

available use grates and stoves which

Breaking camp.—Never break camp until your fire is out—DEAD OUT. USE

brush in windy weather or while there is

the slightest danger that the fire will get

coals while soaking them with water.

Turn small sticks and drench both sides.

Wet ground around the fire. Be sure

6. How to put out a campfire.—Stir the

have been provided.

the last spark is dead.

WATER, where available.

1. Matches.—Be sure your match is out,

2. Tobacco.—Be sure that pipe ashes and

3. Making camp.—Before building fire,

Break it in two before you throw it away.

cigar or cigarette stubs are dead out

before throwing them away. Never throw

not smoke while traveling through the

scrape away all flammable material from

a spot 5 feet in diameter. Dig a hole in the center and in it build your campfire.

Keep your fire small. Never build it

against trees, logs, or near brush. Where

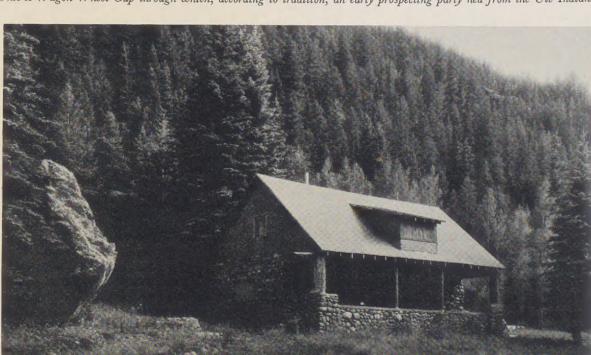
Always remember that the forest is a living thing, the home of wildlife, your property. Be careful not to destroy with fire what it took Nature generations to build.



When water and forage are scarce at lower elevations, the forest range provides these essentials for nearly 13,000 cattle.

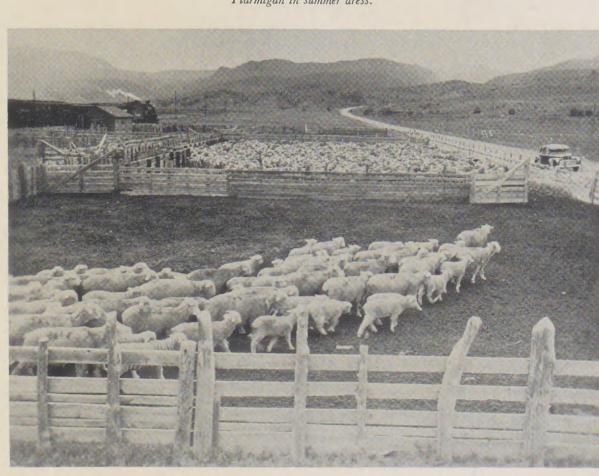


This is Wagon Wheel Gap through which, according to tradition, an early prospecting party fled from the Ute Indians.



A summer home, one of nearly a hundred on the forest, which was built and is occupied under a special-use permit.

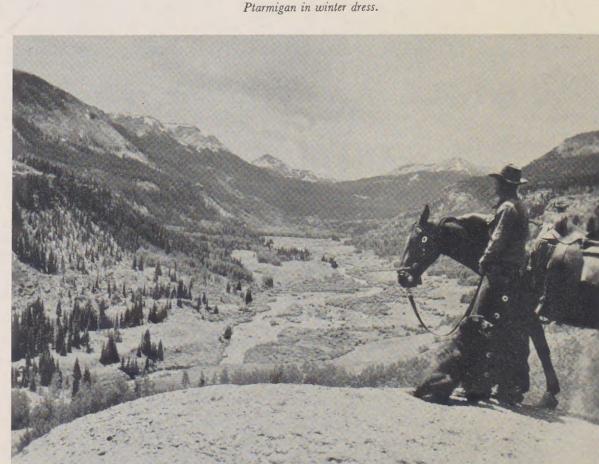
Ptarmigan in summer dress.



Grazing is one of the recognized uses of the Rio Grande. These sheep, from ranches in the San Luis Valley, are on their way to forest range.



[6]



Water and forage on cattle range at Saguache Park contribute their share to maintain a stable livestock industry.



Recreation, timber, wildlife—all find a place on the national forest.

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